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IN MEMORIAM—WILLIAM HENRY DENNIS, ESQ.

BY JOHN PAUL EARNEST.

In every community there are men who make a lasting impression for good upon their fellows. They are not noisy or self-assertive and rather avoid the spectacular which to them is offensive. They exhibit in a quiet way in their daily lives those qualities of mind and heart which attract men to them and hold their respect and esteem. They are reliable, dependable men, who, by their course of conduct in life, have merited and won the respect and affection of those who have come to really know them. They are satisfied to do their duty, day by day, to the best of their ability, never seeking the acclaim of the multitude or the glare of the limelight. Such men are the backbone of every community. When such a man dies, the community in which he lived realizes what a powerful force for good he was, and the universal tribute to him is that the world is better because he lived in it. No greater tribute can be paid any man.

Such a man was William Henry Dennis, who died March 23, 1919, after an illness of only a few days.

He was born in Philadelphia, Pa., February 21, 1856, the only child of Edward Griscom and Katherine (Matthews) Dennis. His grandfather was John Dennis, at one time president of Haverford College, and on his paternal side he was descended from Quaker stock. His mother was Katherine Matthews. She was a daughter of James Matthews, of County Louth, Ireland, who came to this country with his family about the year 1847. His father, Edward Griscom Dennis, died soon after he was born. He lived with his mother in Philadelphia as a boy and attended the public schools of that city. In 1869 they came to Washington and he entered Georgetown University, from which he received the degree of A.B. in 1874, LL.B. in 1876, and M.A. in 1882. He was a diligent and suc-



WILLIAM HENRY DENNIS.

cessful student, graduating at the head of his class. One of his classmates was Father Tom Sherman, son of General William T. Sherman, between whom and Mr. Dennis there always existed the warmest friendship. While at college Mr. Dennis founded and edited *The Georgetown College Journal*. After his graduation from the Law School, he entered the office of the Register of Wills and was Deputy Register from 1876 to 1886. He was the author of "The Probate Law of the District of Columbia" published in 1883. He was for a time private secretary of Justice Blatchford of the Supreme Court of the United States. His thorough classical education and his command of English made him a forceful and effective editorial writer. He traveled extensively in this country and abroad, and was particularly interested in the history and mythology of Egypt and Palestine. He took an active interest in many organizations. He was a director of Carroll Institute; President of the Washington Council, Catholic Benevolent Legion; President of the Lawyers' Club; Manager of the Columbia Historical Society; Chairman of the Bar Examining Committee; member of the Bar Association; American Society of International Law; Humane Society; Oldest Inhabitants Association; and of the University and Century Clubs.

He was married June 20, 1901, to Lula L. Hughlett, who survives him.

At the bar he was regarded as one of its most substantial members. He possessed the confidence and respect of the court and of his brother attorneys. He gave to his cases the most exhaustive study, and represented his clients' interests with the utmost fidelity. He never descended to sharp practice, but was an upright and honorable opponent, as fair and just in his professional relation as he was as a man and citizen. Hope of gain never caused him to swerve one iota from his duty to himself. His conscience was to him something sacred, and was never for sale. Character and integrity were his watchwords. His appreciation of these attributes was shown particularly in his work as Chairman of the Bar Examining Committee. His aim was to admit to the bar only those men who possessed the highest moral character. To be mentally

qualified was not enough. He felt it to be his duty to the court, to the bar, and to the community to see in so far as he could, that the moral qualifications of candidates were of the highest order; that those admitted to practice the profession of the law should be men of unsullied reputation who would zealously uphold the highest professional standards, always bearing in mind that the lawyer is an officer of a court of justice, and never sacrificing duty upon the altar of expediency. In this respect he rendered a service of the greatest value to his profession, and to this city and District.

The influence of such a life is never lost. Sustained by a supreme faith, he has passed to the beyond. Well may he have said with the poet:

"Life! you and I have been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather—
'Tis sad to part when friends are dear,
May cause perhaps a sigh, a tear—
Then steal from sight, take thine own time,
Give little warning,
Say not "Good Night," but in some better clime,
Bid me "Good Morning."

RESOLUTION BY SOCIETY.

At a meeting of the Board of Managers of the Columbia Historical Society, held in the Executive Board Room of The Washington Loan and Trust Company, on April 17, 1919, the following resolution prepared by Allen C. Clark, President, was unanimously adopted:

"On the morning of the twenty-third day of March in the current year, nineteen hundred and nineteen, William Henry Dennis was called to the next life.

"With the Columbia Historical Society nearly all of its life he was intimately identified. He was a member for eighteen years. He was of the Board of Managers for twelve years, and the Treasurer for nine years. As a Manager he gave practical suggestion; as the Treasurer he made sacrifice of time.

"Mr. Dennis was a chief factor in the Society's mission. He contributed valuable historical papers; and to the papers of others, in discussion, he gave the same character of supplement.

“ In the profession of the law, Mr. Dennis had distinctive parts. He had to do particularly with the administration of estates as a public officer and as a legal adviser. He had to do with the qualifications of those who sought to make the law their profession.

“ The disposition of Mr. Dennis was the same one day as another day. Always calm, always cheerful, always greeting; always ready with an incident or a reminiscence and generally in a gentle, humorous vein. He was always welcome, for it is the qualities like these that crown a welcome.

“ He lived not to himself. For the bereaved he had sympathy by deeds. He loved the young, and entered into the enthusiasm of youth. For the dumb creation he had fondness, evidenced by kindness.

“ All who had acquaintanceship with Mr. Dennis respected and esteemed him; and the closer the relationship, the deeper the respect and esteem.

“ *Resolved*, That the management and the membership of this Society, in the passing of William Henry Dennis, feel personal loss, and know it has lost a great assistant in its work.

“ The Columbia Historical Society extends to the family its sympathy, and directs that this expression be transmitted to it.”